



Greater Than the Sum: Using Integrated Care to Reduce Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities Among Dual Eligibles

Role for Consumer Advocates

The phases of the dual eligible demonstration projects (design, implementation and oversight) are an important opportunity for advocates, particularly those from communities of color, to improve care for people eligible for both Medicare and Medicaid (dual eligibles). Each phase creates a unique role for consumer advocates to provide input to the state, health plans and provider groups, and to engage the grassroots to make reducing racial and ethnic disparities a priority.

Design Phase

State Level

- Actively participate in state-hosted public meetings.
- Review state proposals, Memoranda of Understanding and other project documents from a health equity lens and provide written comments.
- Participate in state-organized workgroups on specific design topics, e.g. enrollment, quality.
- Urge the state to include consumer advocates in the selection of plans or provider groups and the readiness review process to ensure the process takes into account the needs of communities of color.

Plan/Provider Group Level

- Interview potential plans or provider groups to learn more about their specific plans to address racial and ethnic disparities and share your perspective on the role they can play in advancing health equity.

Grassroots

- Join forces with other like-minded groups including those that represent communities of color to form a united voice.
- Educate dual eligible beneficiaries, especially those from communities color, about the changes coming and the role they can play in the decision-making process.

Implementation and Oversight Phases

State Level

- Push the state to create tables where all stakeholders can discuss the reduction of racial and ethnic health disparities within the demonstration projectⁱ.
- Create oversight committees that include beneficiaries from communities of color and provide training so they can be effective in their roles.
- Push the state to hold quarterly stakeholder meetings in each region of the state where the dual demonstration is implemented to get feedback on key issues and problems.
- Urge state and federal policymakers to put pressure on the health plans and provider groups to address health disparities.

Plan Level

- Push the health plans and provider groups serving dual eligibles in the demonstration to provide detailed plans for how they will address racial and ethnic disparitiesⁱⁱ and to publicize their successes and challenges.
- Work with the health plans and/or provider groups serving dual eligible beneficiaries under the demonstration to help them develop meaningful strategies for engaging their members and the broader community in ongoing discussions about ways to reduce health disparities. These strategies may include participation in governance, key advisory committees and focus groups. They should include members representing communities of color, be conducted in a culturally competent manner and be fully accessible to those with disabilitiesⁱⁱⁱ.

Grassroots Level

- Ensure consumer coalitions focused on the dual eligible demonstration project include individuals and organizations that represent communities of color.
- Host community meetings, in partnership with organizations that represent communities of color, to educate dual eligibles of color about the demonstration, what it means for their care, and how to play an active role in the implementation and oversight of the demonstration.
- Work with other consumer advocacy groups to monitor progress on how the state and plan are working to address racial and ethnic health disparities. Report information to state and plans.

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ⁱ For a good model see Massachusetts plans for developing a statewide “Implementation Council.” <http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/docs/eohhs/healthcare-reform/prev-meetings/121102-presentation.ppt>.

ⁱⁱ See Community Catalyst, The Dual Eligible Demonstration Projects: State and Health Plan Readiness, February 2012, available at: http://www.communitycatalyst.org/doc_store/publications/State-and-health-readinessFINAL.pdf.

ⁱⁱⁱ See Community Catalyst, Best Practices for Meaningful Consumer Input in New Health Care Delivery Models, September 2012, available at http://www.communitycatalyst.org/doc_store/publications/meaningfulconsumerinput_healthcaredeliverymodels.pdf.